

Introductory notes

- These examples come from an elicitation session with Betsy Shem.
- **My overall goal** for these elicitations was to see what happens in sentences without verbs, specifically verbless sentences involving possessives. I'm interested in marking for animacy, number, and obviation on demonstratives, nouns, and pronouns.
 - For this session, I focused on the **animate noun <nimaas> 'fish'**
 - **Time stamps** next to examples indicate where Betsy's pronunciation can be found in audio file REH1-018. Betsy's pronunciations are really clear. We only recorded small portions of our conversation, in accordance with Betsy's wishes.
 - **Transcriptions** are in the Northern East Cree roman orthography style found on eastcree.org
- Part of what I was trying to figure out is how variation may work between demonstrative forms like <uyaayih> and <uyaah>, meaning 'this' or 'these'. To Betsy, the variation did not always make a change in meaning—sometimes either form was OK to use in a given context, but sometimes it seemed to change the meaning/sense. I can't see a clear pattern, but maybe there's not really an actual difference between the two forms. Maybe one is just a contracted form.
- Betsy explained that her personal speech is influenced by the East Cree varieties spoken at Eastmain and Whapmagoostui. Maybe this has an effect on Betsy's choice of <uyaayih> vs. <uyaah>. But these influences do not seem to affect the forms of her nouns and verbs: She uses the same words and inflections that I've seen described for the Chisasibi dialect.
- Betsy and I worked our way through a series of pictures that I created using clip art. I showed her a picture and asked her how to say things related to that picture. The pictures are included in this file.

Picture 1: A picture of one fish

Chaakwaan uu

'What is this?'

- Whether we pretended like the fish was alive or dead, Betsy still said <Chaakwaan uu> is the way to ask 'What is this?'
- Betsy explained that if we say <Awaan uu> (literally 'Who is this') that would be more like asking what kind of fish it is.

Nimaas uu

'This is a fish'

Picture 2: The picture is of one fisherman and one fish next to him.

Awaan uyaayih

'Whose is this?' (00:32)

- The final [h] on <uuyaayih> is really clear.

Awaan uyaah unimaasimh

'Whose is this fish?' (00:48)

- unimaasimh is 'his/her fish'
- There is a clear final stress on <unimaasimh>. It clearly ends with an [h] too.
- I think the demonstrative <uyaah> also has clear final stress in this sentence.
- Using uyaayih seems to mean something different. Betsy says "myself, I wouldn't put" the <yih> on the demonstrative. Betsy says it could be kind of a difference between dialects, more like Eastmain dialect

Wiiyi uyaayih unimaasimh

'This is his fish' (01:07)

- The pronoun <wiiyi> refers to the possessor 'him/her'
- Again I hear clear final stress on the demonstrative <uyaayih>, so those animate obviative forms <uyaayih> and <uyaah> get final stress—maybe just because of the final -h?
- I asked if you can change the word order and say <Unimaasimh uyaayih>. This is more like a traditional equational structure like <Chaakwaan uu> 'What is this?' Betsy explained that this changes the sense of it to mean something more like a clarifying question 'Is this his fish?'
- Betsy commented on the variation with the demonstrative here. She used <uyaayih>
- She said when she was in school "they used to tell us we speak differently from the local people". She said she hears people (I think she meant specifically in Chisasibi) use either demonstrative form, as in <wiiyi uyaayih> or <wiiyi uyaah>

Wiiyi uyaayih

'This is his (fish)'

- It is OK to say the version without the noun as the possessee.

Wiiyi naah naapaau unimaasimh

'This is that man's fish' (01:30)

- This demonstrative is <naah>, which is the remote form 'that (over there)'
- The final [h] is really clear with <naah>, and there is really clear stress on the first syllable of <naapaau> because there is no final -h

Wiiyi naah naapaau unimaasimh uyaayih

'This is that man's fish' (01:50)

- This version includes the demonstrative <uyaayih> referring to the fish <unimaasimh>
- Betsy says adding this demonstrative doesn't change the meaning from the preceding example <Wiiyi naah naapaau unimaasimh>

Picture 3: This is an image of two fisherman with one fish

Wiiyiwaau uyaah unimaasimwaauh

'This is their fish' (02:07)

- Betsy used <uyaah> here but I didn't ask if <uyaayih> would also work.
- There is a clear final stress and final [h] with <uyaah> as well as final stress on <unimaasimwaauh>. For me, the final [h] is less clear on <unimaasimwaauh>-- maybe it's easier to perceive when it follows an /a/ rather than an /au/

unimaasimwaauh uyaah

'This is their fish'

- Here I asked if the equational structure is OK, where there is no overt possessor <wiiyiwaau> 'they'. Betsy said it works but change the sense a bit. This is the kind of utterance you might say in a clarifying/pointing out manner, as in a response to 'Whose is that?'. It seems to mean something like 'THIS is their fish'.

Wiiyiwaau uyaah

'This is theirs'

- This version is OK, where the noun as possessee is omitted and indicated only by <uyaah>

Naachii naapaauch uyaah unimaasimwaauh

'This is those men's fish' (02:18)

- Here the demonstrative is <naah> + the animate plural. I clearly hear an [i] at the end of <naachii>. It is definitely not a reduced or lax vowel. So I have chosen the spelling that uses the <ii>.
- Something is happening between the <aau> and <ch> of <naapaauch>. It seems like a half-beat of a pause or something. At first I thought the final <ch> of 'men' actually shows up at the beginning of <uyaah> because of syllable structure: That <ch> gets assigned to the onset of vowel-initial <uyaah>. But I'm not sure what's happening. Marguerite thinks maybe that half-beat is a reduced underlying /wi/ from the underlying plural /wich/ ... I think that could explain it too. Something to check up on another time, and maybe something that could be interesting for language learners.

Picture 4: This is a picture of three fish.

Chaakwaau uu

'What are these?'

- So the same form <Chaakwaau uu> can mean 'What is this?> as well as 'What are these?' in referring to fish(es).
- Betsy seemed to indicate that <Chaakwaau uu> refers to the group as a single collective.
- She indicated that <Chaakwaanhiu uhii> would be for some plural inanimate only. It can't refer to the fishes in the same way.

- <Awaanchii uchii> would mean the speaker is asking what kind of fish there are. The form <Awaan uu> can't refer to the group of fish.
- The form <Awaan hii uhii>, where there are inanimate plural endings attached to both words, sounds really bad: Betsy says "that's not Cree". I was just experimenting to see how that might go.

Nimaasich uchii

'These are fishes' (02:32)

- No final stress here. I hear clear stress on the second syllable of <nimaasich> and on the first syllable of <uchii>

Picture 5: The picture is of one fisherman next to a cluster of three fish

Awaan uyaayih

'Whose are these?' (02:44)

- This example shows number neutralization: The same form is used to ask 'Whose is this?' and 'Whose are these?' So the demonstrative signifying the referent does not tell the listener how many fish there are.
- Again, final stress on <uyaayih>, which ends with an -h

Awaan uyaayih unimaasimh

'Whose are these fishes?' (02:53)

- It's hard for me to detect stress placement in this one, because the pronunciation was faster.
- Betsy did produce the demonstrative <uyaayih> as opposed to the <uyaah> she produced in <Awaan uyaah unimaasimh> 'Whose is this fish?' (00:48). Maybe the variation between <uyaayih> and <uyaah> plays into distinguishing singular from plural referents? I didn't catch it at the time and ask about it. Maybe there is nothing to this idea, but maybe there is. Something to ask about another time.

Wiiyi uyaayih unimaasimh

'These are his fishes' (03:07)

- <uyaayih> again

Unimaasimh uyaayih

'These are his fishes' (03:19)

- This version is OK too, again kind of clarifying

Wiiyi uyaayih

'These are his' (03:36)

Maanaah naapaau unimaasimh

'These are that man's fishes' (03:57)

- Here Betsy is using the remote demonstrative from Set Two, which are more emphatic: 'That (one right there)'. This is probably because of the way I asked the question, where I emphasized the word "that".

- I hear a clear [h] at the end of <maanaah, so I spell it as such

Wiiyi naah naapaau unimaasimh

'These are that man's fishes'

- I asked if this version, without the emphatic pronoun is OK. Here the pronoun <wiiyi> + <naah> both modify and emphasize <naapaau>: 'That man (over there)'
- Betsy said it "means the same" as <Maanaah naapaau unimaasimh>

Maaunaah naapaau unimaasimh uyaayih

'That man, it's his fish'

- This one is more of a cleft construction, where <unimaasimh uyaayih> is an equational construction like 'This is his fish'

Wiiyi naah naapaau unimaasimh uyaayih

- This one is OK, but Betsy says this sounds "as if you're reassuring that person about what they are" (the person who has asked who the fish belonged to). Like 'That man, these are his fish'.

Picture 6: The picture is of two fisherman next to a cluster of three fish

Wiiyiwaau uyaah unimaasimwaauh

'These are their fishes'

unimaasimwaauh uyaah

'These are their fishes'

- This one is again possible

Maanachii naapaauch unimaasimwaauh

'These are those men's fishes'

- Betsy's pronunciation of <maanachii> has kind of a [mau] in the first syllable. I left the spelling the same, though.
- This one "sounds better" than the next:

Wiiyiwaau naachii naapaauch unimaasimwaauh

'These are those men's fishes'











